

**Thomas Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, February 13, 1799, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO ARCHIBALD STUART<sup>1</sup>**

1 From the original in the possession of the Virginia Historical Society.

Philadelphia, Feb. 13, 99.

Dear Sir, —I avoid writing to my friends because the fidelity of the post office is very much doubted. I will give you briefly a statement of what we have done and are doing. The following is a view of our finances in round numbers. The impost brings in the last year 7 ½ millions of dollars, the excise, carriages, auctions, & licenses, ½ a million, the residuary small articles # of a million. It is expected that the stamp act may pay the expense of the direct tax, so that the two may be counted at 2. millions, making in the whole 10 # millions. Our expenses for the civil list ¾ of a million, foreign intercourse ½ a million (this includes Indian & Algerine expenses, the Spanish & British treaties), interest of the public debt 4. millions, the existing navy 2 ½ millions, the existing army, 5,000 men, 1 ½. millions, making 9 ¼. millions, so that we have a surplus of near a million. But the additional army, 9,000 men, now raising, will add 2 ½. millions annually, the additional navy proposed 3. millions, and the interest of the new loans ½ a million, making 6 millions more, so that as soon as the army and navy shall be ready, our whole expenses will be 15. millions; consequently, there will be 5. millions annually more to be raised by taxes. Our present taxes of 10. M. are 2. dollars a head on our present population, and the future 5. M. will make it 3. D. Our whole exports (native) this year are 28 M., so that our taxes are now # & will soon be ½ of our whole exports; & when you add the expenses of the State

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Governments we shall be found to have got to the plenum of taxation in 10. short years of peace. Great Britain, after centuries of wars & revolutions, had at the commencement of the present war taxed only to the amount of # of her exports. We have opened a loan for 5 M., @ 8. percent. interest, & another is proposed of 2. M. These are to build 6. 74's & 6. 18's, in part of additional navy, for which a bill passed the H of R 2 days ago, by 54. against 42. Beside the existing army of 5,000 & additional army of 9,000, an *eventual* army of 30,000 is proposed to be raised by the President, in case of invasion by

any European power, or danger of invasion, *in his opinion*, and the *volunteer* army, the amount of which we know not, is to be immediately called out & exercised at the public expense. For these purposes a bill has been twice read and committed in the Senate. You have seen by Gerry's communication that France is *sincerely anxious* for reconciliation, willing to give us a *liberal* treaty, and does not wish us to break the British treaty, but only to put her on an equal footing. A further proof of her sincerity turned up yesterday. We had taken an armed vessel from her, had refitted and sent her to cruise against them, under the name of the *Retaliation*, and they re-captured & sent her into Guadaloupe. The new commissioners arriving there from France, sent Victor Hughes off in irons, and said to our captain, that as they found him bearing a regular commission as an officer of the Ud S, with his vessel in their port, & his crew, they would inquire into no fact respecting the vessel preceding their arrival, but that he, his vessel & crew, were free to depart. They arrived here yesterday. The federal papers call her a *cartel*. It is whispered that the Executive mean to return an equal number of the French prisoners, and this may give a color to call her a cartel, but she was liberated freely & without condition. The commissioners further said to the captain that, as to the differences with the Ud S, new commissioners were coming out from France to settle them, & in the meantime they should do us no injury. The President has appointed Rufus King to make a commercial treaty with the Russians in London, and Wm Smith, (of S C,) to go to Constantinople to make one with the Turks. Both appointments are confirmed by the Senate. A little dissatisfaction was expressed by some that we should never have treated with them till the

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moment when they had formed a coalition with the English against the French. You have seen that the Directory had published an arret declaring they would treat as pirates any neutrals they should take in the ships of their enemies. The President communicated this to Congress as soon as he received it. A bill was brought into Senate reciting that arret, and authorizing retaliation. Tho' the P received information almost in the same

instant that the Directory had suspended the arret (which fact was privately declared by the Secretary of state to two of the Senate), and, tho' it was known we were passing an act founded on that arret, yet the P has never communicated the suspension. However the Senate, informed indirectly of the fact, still passed the act yesterday, an hour after we had heard of the return of our vessel & crew before mentioned. It is acknoleged on all hands, & declared by the insurance companies that the British depredations during the last 6. months have greatly exceeded the French, yet not a word is said about it officially. However, all these things are working on the public mind. They are getting back to the point where they were when the X. Y. Z. story was played off on them. A wonderful & rapid change is taking place in Pennsylvania, Jersey, & N York. Congress is daily plied with petitions against the alien & sedition laws & standing armies. Several parts of this State are so violent that we fear an insurrection. This will be brought about by some if they can. It is the only thing we have to fear. The appearance of an attack of force against the government would check the present current of the middle States, and rally them around the government; whereas, if suffered to go on, it will pass on to a reformation of abuses. The materials now bearing on the public mind will infallibly restore it to it's republican soundness in the course of the present summer, if the knolege of facts can only be disseminated among the people. Under separate cover you will receive some pamphlets written by George Nicholas on the acts of the last session. These I wish you to distribute, not to sound men who have no occasion for them, but to such as have been misled, are candid & will be open to the conviction of truth, and are of influence among their neighbors. It is the sick who need medicine, & not the well. Do not let my name

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appear in the matter. Perhaps I shall forward you some other things to be distributed in the same way. Let me now trouble you with a small private matter.

Mr. Clarke was tolerably punctual in his remittances as long as he continued in business. But when he quitted he had near £100. of mine for nails actually sold, in his hands. For so I had a right to consider it as I charged only ready money prices, & such was the condition settled between us. This money has now been a twelvemonth in his hands, and the intermediate applications ineffectual. In truth I am not able to carry on my manufactory but on ready sales. I have no money capital to enable me to make great advances & long winded debts. If you could mention the matter to mr. Clarke in any way that would best suit the footing on which you stand with him, & be the means of my receiving it immediately on my return home (about the loth of March) it would be a very sensible relief to me. And indeed if he does not pay it soon I must use effectual means to obtain it, such delays being incompatible with the course or the necessities of my manufactory. Present me respectfully to mrs. Stuart, and accept assurances of the sincere esteem of, dear Sir, your affectionate friend and servant.